**Building a Regular Season Schedule**

There are many football officials and football crews that build regular season schedules totally on their own but they are a rare commodity. Building a schedule doesn’t mean scheduling 8-10 varsity dates but should mean building the quality of games you and your crew officiates. Not a single NFL official started their careers working pro games. They started where all of us are or have been. At some point, they likely officiated kids in house leagues, flag football, Jr. High, JV, High School Varsity, Junior College, NCAA D-3, NCAA D-2, NCAA D-1, NFL Euro and then NFL games. Now that’s building the ultimate schedule.

So you want to officiate high school football? Here are some tips to get you started.

1. Join an association. The vast majority of high school games are assigned by officiating associations. Athletic and Activity Directors have 25 to 50 activities that come under their responsibility. They have to make sure facilities are available and ready. They have to make sure support personnel are available. They have to arrange transportation. They do not have time to hire officials for each and every event.
2. Be available. Assignment secretaries contact people they can count on. If you are continually refusing games/assignments or turning back games, you’ll never build a schedule. Be available to work any position on a crew. You never know what position you’ll be asked to work when the opportunity comes. The recommendation you receive from a crew you have substituted on can do wonders for your officiating career. Let veteran crew chiefs know you’re available should they need a substitute or replacement.
3. Work as much football as you can regardless of the level. Work especially on these particular items. Your appearance makes the first and most lasting impression all will make. Be a great communicator as it seems the best officials are the best communicators. Work on you judgment as good judgment comes from experience and often experience comes from bad judgment. Acquire strong mechanics as you can have great communication skills and perfect judgment but if you don’t have good mechanics, you’ll never be perceived as a good official. And lastly, have a great attitude. Work every game as if it’s the Prep Bowl because it likely feels that way to the players, coaches and parents observing your work. Work every game as if you’re being observed by someone that has the influence to move you to the next level.
4. Make sure every coach or athletic director knows who you are. Make sure the coach has a card with your name on it. He should be able to call you by your first name, not “Hey, ref”.
5. Make sure every athletic director knows you have been assigned to officiate a game, when to expect your arrival and how they can contact you in an emergency. This is very important because coaches make recommendations to AD’s, coaches make recommendations to a Assignment Secretary, Athletic Directors make recommendations to a Assignment Secretary and the Assignment Secretary will send officials that will be acceptable by coaches.

**Building a State Tournament Schedule**

Football officials are assigned by crew and are known by whoever is the crew chief. The first step you have to take is to apply as a crew to work the State Tournament. The second step is notifying the High School League that you wish to be observed by an official observer. A third step is to contact tournament managers to indicate your interest in working at that level. Ultimately, every tournament assignment is going to begin with a recommendation from someone who has seen you work. This is the toughest nut to crack. Once you have worked a tournament game, it becomes much easier to work other tourney games. It’s like getting a free pass because you’re now considered “Tournament Qualified”.

In every sport at every level, officials are qualified to work bigger games or work at a higher level and are never given the opportunity. The phrase, “few are chosen” should have been coined for officials, not the Marines. Are there officials working lower level games that are qualified to be on varsity crews? Absolutely. Will they ever get a chance? Yes, in time. Do we have officials that have worked 20 plus years and have never had a section or state level game even though they are qualified? Absolutely. Will they ever get a chance? Maybe not! Are there officials in our association that are qualified to work college football? Absolutely. Will they ever get a chance? Probably not! Is any of this fair? NO. But it is what it is. That’s why IF opportunity knocks for you, answer the door because you’re more fortunate than most and opportunity may not knock again.